



ACROSS THE MOVEMENT

Stories of God at work

Church-Planting Successes

Recognizing where God is at work *interview by Diane J. McDougall*

EACH YEAR, THE EFCA AWARDS special recognition to individuals, churches and districts that have made church planting their passion and are reaping its fruit. This year's awards go to (pictured from left to right):

- **Kevin Hawkins** (Urban & Intercultural Church Planter Award), pastor of Anointed Fellowship Bible Church in Lancaster, Texas
- **Jeff Sorvik** (Church Planter Award), pastor of Anchor Point Community Church in Duluth, Minn.
- **Mark Doss** and the EFCA's Central District team (District Church Planter Award), in Boone, Iowa

EFCA Today spoke with Kevin, Jeff and Mark in three separate interviews and gained the following insights:

When did you first gain a heart for church planting?

Kevin: In spring 2000, I was attending Dallas Theological Seminary and was in leadership at my father's church in Oakcliff, Texas, where I had grown up. I lived in nearby Lancaster and had seen more and more African Americans moving out that way. Yet other than a few small house churches, there were no churches to meet those changing needs. I was considering church planting but didn't have an idea of how to do it.

I then met George Klippenes [EFCA director of church planting] at DTS' church-planting week, who put me in contact with Rick Thompson [then-superintendent of the South Central District]. Right away I knew that the EFCA was the right fit for me.

Jeff: I connected with the EFCA about 10 years ago, after eight years working as a technical writer and business analyst, and serving as elder and lay pastor at an independent Baptist church. And while there, I helped them plant a church. As I was finishing up my training, my business career was also ramping up. I was an elder and I had kids, so I told my mentor I couldn't live with a foot in both worlds like this much longer. I needed to make the transition [to full-time pastoring].

The first church I went to was Lake Community Church (EFCA) in Alexandria, Minn., as pastor of leadership development. I served there for three-and-a-half years before I sensed a call to church planting.

Mark: After 10 years pastoring in the EFCA, I came into the church-planting scene to figure out how to "do church" well. You look around and say, "Who seems to understand the missional aspect of the church, and how can I connect with them?" Being missional means we go out



ADAM BETTCHER

and reach people; we don't wait for them to come to us.

Kevin and Jeff, how did your particular church plants unfold?

Kevin: I knew that God was calling me to start a ministry in Lancaster, so I started laying the groundwork at my old church, where my dad would be retiring soon—getting people to buy into the vision. A year after church-planting bootcamp in 2000, we transplanted ourselves from Oakcliff to Lancaster with a core group of people. Then in April 2002, we launched officially as Anointed Fellowship Bible Church. About 200 are attending now, and we just bought some property.

Jeff: One day at a district conference, I got together with George Klippenes to talk about church planting, and I asked, "What do you think of Duluth?" He got a big smile on his face and said, "We've been praying for a number of years for somebody to go there." It was the largest metro in Minnesota that did not have an Evangelical Free Church within the city limits.

So we came up here with the notion of planting in Duluth. At the same time, we discovered North Bay Community Church—an EFCA church plant just across the bridge in Superior, Wis., that had launched but had significant adversity. We spent seven years getting that replanted. Then, a year ago, North Bay agreed that we should come over here and go back to the original vision of planting in Duluth. They sent my

family and nine other families, and our public launch will be this fall.

I resonate a lot with Paul when he purposed to go to a place and the Holy Spirit prevented him for a season.

Mark, how did this passion for church planting unfold for the Central District?

Mark: The watershed year was about 1989/1990, when the district made an intentional decision to start planting churches. We had 50 churches, and our goal was to double in size in one decade. It only took us a little longer than that. Now we're at 117. We can't manufacture "church"; we just have to learn to be the stewards so that when God decides to build the church, we're ready to be part of it.

There's always this tension between building our present churches bigger and better, and planting new churches. In the big picture that's a healthy tension, and we're always working through those issues.

We're always looking for potential places to plant, develop core groups or launch teams. Once those groups have launched, we help them move to maturity, and then we move on. We might be coaching a planter or planting ourselves. We're looking for three more church-planting missionaries for other geographic areas in our district, and also someone to develop cross-cultural church planting in Hispanic communities.

Do you feel as if you have a "typical" church-planter's temperament?

Kevin: Yes. Part of it is being a self-starter and initiator and having a strong vision. And you need the ability to preach that vision from behind the pulpit. You also need determination—a willingness to endure the hardship of ministry—and the ability to gather people together. My father was a church planter, so I had that in my roots, my DNA. He planted the church I grew up in.

Mark: My first response is no. My wife and I never saw ourselves in a church-planting role. However, I really do enjoy the starting/creative process. Dreaming with people about a vision for the church and then designing the ministry around that vision is a very satisfying role for me. I sometimes wonder whether I have the right temperament to be a church planter, but I do have a strong sense of God's leading and preparing me to serve Him in this ministry.

Jeff: My wife would probably say yes. There are certainly traits that church planters tend to share: not being averse to risk, being open to change. I'm odd enough to really thrive on it. I have a tendency to make plans and want to make things happen. Some of that "bulldoggedness" is OK, but there's an intense spiritual reality to what we're doing, and it isn't all about *my* plans.

The things that all of us as Christ followers should be impassioned about are reaching lost people and making an impact in our community, but church planters like the fact that we aren't encumbered with "how we've done it before." I'd like to challenge other churches to really think about the value of multiplying. As our culture is changing so quickly, it's hard for any one church to meet all the needs in the area surrounding it. ■

"Here at Caley House and Loving it"



Liz Anderson and Leeta Thornton dedicated over thirty years of their lives to missionary work in Africa with the EFCA.

At Elim Care, we are happy to have them in our family and help them like they have helped so many others.

Caley House is one of Elim Care's 22 senior housing and healthcare communities across Minnesota, North Dakota, and Iowa.

Elim Care's mission is to serve older adults with a commitment to compassion, excellence, and innovation as we demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ.

 **Elim Care**
www.elimcare.org



Endorsed by and Affiliated with
the Evangelical Free Church of America

Visit us online at www.elimcare.org
for your free copy of the *Intro to Elim* DVD!